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SUBJECT: Sambi Announces New Cabinet, Island Election Dates

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: President Sambi expanded his cabinet by adding four new Ministers and shrinking the massive portfolios of his existing team. None of the Ministers in place since 2006 was removed. The electoral commission also announced the Island President elections will be held June 10, with run-offs June 24 if necessary. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) President Sambi's new cabinet of the Government of the Union of the Comoros (GOC) includes two Vice Presidents and 10 Ministers. He kept all existing team members and added four new Ministers:

-- Mohamed ALI SOILIHI, Minister of Finance, Budget and Plan;

-- Mourad SAID IBRAHIM, Minister of Justice, Civil Service, Prison Administration, and Government Reforms;

-- Houmadi ABDALLAH, Minister of Energy, Mines, and Industry;

-- Fouad Ben MOHADJI, Minister of Investment Promotion, Micro-Finance, and Decentralized Cooperation. (Unlike the other three new Ministers who take up existing portfolios, this is a new Ministry).

Ministers HASSANI HAMADI (formerly Finance and Budget) and M'MADI ALI (formerly Justice) took demotions to smaller, lower-profile portfolios. Minister MHADJI remains busy with Land Reform, Infrastructure, Housing, and Urban Development, but has been moved off of the Energy portfolio. At our earliest opportunity, Post will pay courtesy calls on the new Ministers and report relevant biographic information.

Island President Elections June 10

¶3. (U) The GOC officially announced the Island President elections for Grand Comore, Anjouan, and Moheli would be held June 10, with run-offs June 24 if necessary. To date, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) has received official registrations for nine candidates from Anjouan, 22 from Grande Comore, and five from Moheli.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: Given the breadth of portfolios in Sambi's first cabinet, it is not too surprising he felt the need to expand his team. Given an empty treasury, however, Post wonders how the Union Government will pay the additional salaries and benefits. The long-awaited Island President elections will be hotly contested throughout the Comoros, especially in Anjouan, where Island President Bacar is loathe to give up his advantageous position as head of a little fiefdom. Sambi will be equally eager to rid himself of the corrupt and obstinate Bacar who challenges the Union President's authority. END COMMENT.

PATRICK